(x) To augment availability of pulses, permitted the Public Sector Undertakings (namely, STC, MMTC, and PEC) and NAFED to import and sell pulses under a scheme and losses, if any, up to 15% are reimbursed by the Government.

(xi) Distribution of imported pulses to State Governments at a subsidy of Rs.10 per kg.

Availability of sugar in open market

186. SHRI N.K. SINGH:
SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has asked the sugar barons in the country recently to increase supplies in the market to rein in soaring prices of the sweetener;

(b) if so, whether the impact of Government on sugar barons has been assessed;

(c) if so, to what extent;

(d) whether the acreage under the sugarcane has been declining and the sugar mills are not paying the dues to farmers in time; and

(e) if so, the corrective steps Government proposes to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) and (e) Acreage under sugarcane declined in 2007-08 crop year (2008-09 sugar season) over that of in 2006-07 crop year (2007-08 sugar season). The delay in payment of cane price to sugarcane farmers in 2006-07 and 2007-08 sugar seasons (when there was excess production of sugar and prices of non-levy sugar declined in the market constraining capacities of sugar mills to pay cane price including cane price arrears) can possibly be one of the reasons for decline in acreage under sugarcane. The details of corrective steps taken by the Government to increase acreage under sugarcane are given in the enclosed Statement.

Statement

Steps taken by the Government to check decline area under sugarcane

(a) The Central Government has now fixed the Fair & Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane payable by sugar mills for 2009-10 sugar season at Rs.129.84 per quintal linked to a basic recovery rate of 9.5% subject to a premium of Rs. 1.37 per quintal for every 0.1 percentage point increase in recovery above that level. Hitherto, the Central Government was fixing the Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) of sugarcane. This FRP is substantially high over the SMP of 2008-09 sugar season which was Rs.81.18 per quintal, with an additional premium of Rs.0.90 for every 0.1% point increase in the recovery above 9%.

(b) The Sustainable Development of Sugarcane Based Cropping System (SUBACS) is one of the components of Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), namely revised Revised Macro Management of Agriculture Scheme (RMMA). RMMA is implemented in all States and Union Territories of the country. The main thrust of SUBACS is on the transfer of improved production technology to the farmers through field demonstrations, training of farmers, supply of farm implements, enhancing production of planting materials, efficient use of water, treatment of planting materials. During 2008-09, in all, 19 States implemented SUBACS.

(c) Concessional loans at an interest rate of 4% per annum are given to sugar factories from Sugar Development Fund (SDF) for modernization of plant and machinery, expansion of crushing capacity, utilization of by-products *viz.* baggasse for co-generation of power and molasses for production of ethanol, upgradation of technology and sugarcane development including better irrigation facilities, improved seed variety, ratoon management etc.

(d) A short term scheme has been announced for cane development in the current financial year under which loans of Rs. 1.0 to 2.5 crore will be available to sugar factories depending upon their crushing capacity, for purchase of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides etc. This loan is expected to be passed on to the farmers.

Huge difference between whole-sale and retail prices of food items

†187. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:

SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a huge difference in whole-sale and retail prices of food items especially those of vegetables and pulses;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) the average difference, in general, in the first half of year 2009-10?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The difference in general, in the first half of year 2009-10 is given in the enclosed Statement.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi